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## MOBILE PHONES: ACCEPTABLE USE PROTOCOL (STUDENTS)

### **Purpose**

The widespread ownership of mobile phones among young people requires that staff, students, parents and carers take steps to ensure that mobile phones are used responsibly at school. This Acceptable Use Protocol is designed to ensure that potential issues involving mobile phones can be clearly identified and addressed, ensuring the benefits that mobile phones provide (such as increased safety) can continue to be enjoyed by our students.

Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre has established the following Acceptable Use Protocol for mobile phones that provides staff, students, parents and carers guidelines and instructions for the appropriate use of mobile phones during school hours.

Students, their parents or carers must read and understand the Acceptable Use Protocol as a condition upon which permission is given to bring mobile phones to school.

The Acceptable Use Protocol for mobile phones also applies to students during school trips and visits, camps and extra-curricular activities both on the school grounds and off-site.

### **Rationale**

Our rural setting and wide travel to work area for working parents presents challenges when it comes to communications. The school recognises that personal communication through mobile technologies is an accepted part of everyday life but that such technologies need to be used well.

#### **Personal safety and security**

Our School accepts that parents/carers give their children mobile phones to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. There is also increasing concern about children travelling alone on public transport or commuting long distances to school. It is acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone gives parents reassurance that they can contact their child if they need to speak to them urgently.

It is also recognised that mobile phone technologies, deployed in the right way, can be beneficial to learning in the classroom.

### **Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of students who bring mobile phones to school to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.

The decision to provide a mobile phone to their children should be made by parents or carers. It is incumbent upon parents to understand the capabilities of the phone and the potential use/mis-use of those capabilities.

Parents/carers should be aware if their child takes a mobile phone to school; it is assumed household insurance will provide the required cover in the event of loss or damage. The school cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage or costs incurred due to its use.

Pupils are responsible for keeping the school informed of their current mobile phone to aid return if lost on the school site.



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Parents/carers are reminded that in cases of emergency, the school reception remains the main and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in any relevant way. Passing on messages through school reception also reduces the likelihood of disrupting lessons inadvertently.

### **Acceptable Uses**

Mobile phones should be switched off and kept out of sight during classroom lessons and while moving between lessons unless explicit permission has been given by a teacher for their use. Exceptions may be permitted only in exceptional circumstances if the parent/carer specifically requests it. Such requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis and should be directed to Assistant Principal, Behaviour and Attendance. Parents/carers are requested that in cases of emergency they contact the school first so the school is aware of any potential issue and may make the necessary arrangements.

While on school premises at break times only, students should use soundless features such as text messaging, answering services, call diversion and vibration alert to receive important calls.

Mobile phones should not be used in any manner or place that is disruptive to the normal routine of the school (see below).

Students should protect their phone numbers by only giving them to close friends and keeping a note of who they have given them to. This can help protect the student's number from falling into the wrong hands and guard against the receipt of insulting, threatening or unpleasant voice, text and picture messages.

The school recognises the importance of emerging technologies present in modern mobile phones e.g. camera and video recording, internet access, MP3 and MP4 playback, blogging etc. Teachers may wish to utilise these functions to aid teaching and learning and students may have the opportunity to use their mobile phones in the classroom. On these occasions students may use their mobile phones in the classroom when express permission has been given by the teacher. The use of personal mobile phones in one lesson for a specific purpose does not mean blanket usage is then acceptable.

### **Unacceptable Uses**

Unless express permission is granted, mobile phones should not be used to make calls, send SMS messages, surf the internet, take photos or use any other application during school lessons and other educational activities, such as assemblies.

The Bluetooth function of a mobile phone must be switched off at all times and not be used to send images or files to other mobile phones.

Mobile phones must not disrupt classroom lessons with ring tones, music or beeping. They should be turned off during lesson times.

Using mobile phones to bully and threaten other students is unacceptable. Cyber bullying will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour. If the use of technology humiliates, embarrasses or causes offence it is unacceptable regardless of whether 'consent' was given.

It is forbidden for students to "gang up" on another student and use their mobile phones to take videos and pictures of acts to denigrate and humiliate that student and then send the pictures to other students or upload it to a website for public viewing. This also includes using mobile phones to photograph or film any student or member of staff without their consent. It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person and almost all calls, text messages and emails can be traced.



Mobile phones are not to be used or taken into changing rooms or toilets or used in any situation that may cause embarrassment or discomfort to their fellow students, staff or visitors to the school.

Should there be more than one disruption to lessons caused by a mobile phone, the responsible student may face disciplinary actions as sanctioned by the Principal. This may include a mobile phone ban in school.

It is unacceptable to take a picture of a member of staff without their permission. In the event that this happens the student will be asked and expected to delete those images.

### **Theft or damage**

Students should mark their mobile phone clearly with their names.

Students who bring a mobile phone to school should leave it locked away in their locker/bag when they arrive. To reduce the risk of theft during school hours, students who carry mobile phones are advised to keep them well concealed and not 'advertise' they have them.

Mobile phones that are found in the school and whose owner cannot be located should be handed to reception.

The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen or damaged mobile phones.

The school accepts no responsibility for students who lose or have their mobile phones stolen while travelling to and from school.

It is strongly advised that students use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones (e.g. by other students, or if stolen). Students must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phones and/or passwords may not be shared.

Lost and stolen mobile phones in the U.K. can be blocked across all networks making them virtually worthless because they cannot be used. In the event of a loss or theft the school will assist in arranging blocking.

### **Inappropriate conduct**

Mobile phones are banned from all examinations. Students are expected to hand phones to invigilators before entering the exam hall. Any student found in possession of a mobile phone during an examination will have that paper disqualified. Such an incident may result in all other exam papers being disqualified.

Any student who uses vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language while using a mobile phone will face disciplinary action.

Students with mobile phones may not engage in personal attacks, harass another person, or post private information about another person using SMS messages, taking/sending photos or objectionable images, and phone calls. Students using mobile phones to bully other students will face disciplinary action. *[It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the police.]*

Students must ensure that files stored on their phones do not contain violent, degrading, racist or pornographic images. The transmission of such images is a criminal offence. Similarly, 'sexting' – which is the sending of personal sexual imagery - is also a criminal offence.

### **Sanctions**



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Students who infringe the rules set out in this document could face having their phones confiscated by teachers. If the phone is being used inappropriately the student must give it to a teacher if requested.

On the first infringement of this policy the mobile phone would be confiscated by the teacher and taken to a secure place at the school reception or a place deemed appropriate by a member of the school's pastoral management team. The student will be able to collect the mobile phone at the end of the school day and a record will be made of the incident. A letter will also be sent to the parent/carer to inform them of the incident.

On the second infringement the mobile phone would be confiscated by the teacher and taken to a secure place at the school reception or a place deemed appropriate by a member of the school's pastoral management team. Parents will be notified and the student will be permitted to collect the phone with a parent/carer's verbal consent.

On a third infringement the mobile phone would be confiscated by the teacher and taken to a secure place at the school reception or a place deemed appropriate by a member of the school's pastoral management team. Parents will be notified and the parent required to collect the phone from the school. If a parent/carer is unable to attend the school they are permitted to phone and give verbal consent for their child to collect the phone and must speak to a member of the senior staff or pastoral team. The incident will be recorded.

Any further infringements of the mobile phone code of conduct may result in a ban from carrying a mobile phone during the school day or from bringing a mobile phone into school. To continue to carry a mobile phone in school during the day when a ban is in place will be deemed defiance against school rules and the instructions of a senior member of staff and may result in a sanction linked to student defiance and failure to follow instructions, for example, and internal exclusion.

The length of a mobile phone ban will depend on the nature of the offence. A ban imposed for inappropriate use in lessons or other school activities, like assemblies, is likely to be in place for the length of one school term or a 6 week minimum.

As set out in the previous section, failure to heed the rules set out in this document may result in an alleged incident – of a serious nature - being referred to the police for investigation. In such cases, the parent or carer would be notified immediately.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Senior Leadership Team shall review this protocol from time to time to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

If Staff have any questions about this protocol or suggestions for additions that they would like to be considered on review, they may do so by emailing the Principal or Assistant Principal, Behaviour and Attendance.

The School will continue to review the effectiveness of this Protocol to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

### **Date of Review**

September 2017